

WASHINGTON— At a House Judiciary Committee hearing yesterday, House Oversight Committee Chairman Darrell Issa confronted Attorney General Eric Holder on the DOJ's Operation Fast and Furious, a highly controversial operation where federal authorities facilitated the purchase of assault weapons for drug cartels and chose not to interdict them before being transported to Mexico.

While Attorney General Holder was unwilling to provide answer about who at the Department of Justice authorized, knew about, and even whether he still defended Operation Fast and Furious, three new documents provide information that Attorney General Holder did not address in response to questions posed by Rep. Issa.

"Two federal agents are dead," said Chairman Issa. "While Attorney General Holder and other top officials at the Justice Department have refused to address the reckless decisions made in Operation Fast and Furious that have created a serious public safety hazard, investigations led by Sen. Charles Grassley and I continue to receive information from deeply concerned insiders who believe those responsible for what has occurred cannot be trusted to investigate themselves."

What the documents say that Attorney General Holder wouldn't:

US Attorney for the District of Arizona Dennis Burke was in full agreement with the investigative strategy of allowing the transfer of firearms to continue

[A January 8, 2010 memo](#) from the ATF Phoenix Field Division Office on Operation Fast and Furious noting the involvement of US Attorney for the District of Arizona Dennis Burke who was in “full agreement with the current investigative strategy.” The memo states that “currently our strategy is to allow the transfer of firearms to continue to take place ... in order to further the investigation and allow for the identification of additional co-conspirators who would continue to operate and illegally traffic firearms to Mexican [Drug Trafficking Organizations].”

Assistant Attorney General Lanny Breuer knew about and even approved a wiretap application for suspects targeted in Operation Fast and Furious over a year ago

[A March 10, 2010 memo](#) from Assistant Attorney General Lanny Breuer authorizing a wiretap application and revealing his participation in and knowledge of Operation Fast and Furious.

As Pressure from Congress has risen, DOJ officials are now scrambling to stop the practice of letting guns walk into Mexico

[A March 10, 2011 e-mail](#) referencing a directive from the Deputy Attorney General ordering law enforcement agents not to “design or conduct undercover operations which include guns crossing the border.” The e-mail clarifies that this includes “cases where we are working with the Mexican government to have them follow the vehicles once they are in Mexico.

Key Moments:

Holder: This operation has gotten a great deal of publicity.

Issa: There are dead Americans as a result of this failed and reckless program. So I would say this hasn't gotten enough attention, has it Mr. Attorney General?

Issa: Mr. Attorney General, we're looking at you. We're looking at your key people who knew or should have known about this and whether or not your judgment was consistent with good practices and whether or not, instead, the Justice Department is basically guilty of allowing weapons to kill Americans and Mexicans. So will you agree to cooperate with that investigation, both on the House and Senate side?

Holder: We'll certainly cooperate with all the investigations, but I'm going to take great exception to what you just said. The notion that somehow or other, this Justice Department is responsible for those deaths that you mentioned, that assertion is offensive. I want to tell you that -

Issa: But what if it *is* accurate, Mr. Attorney General?

Issa: So what am I going to tell Agent Terry's mother about how he died at the hand of a gun that was videotaped as it was sold to a straw purchaser fully expecting it to end up in the hands of drug cartels?

Holder: Well, you know, what we'll have to see exactly what happened with regard to the guns that are at issue there. And I've attended funerals, you know? This is something that – This isn't theoretical. It's not political. This is extremely real from me, as Attorney General.

Issa: It is for us too.

###